563 Although different ancestry sets apart the Hui people from the Han Chinese, lack of racial prejudice on the part of the Hui facilitates the assimilation of Han Chinese into the Hui community and renders the racial composition of the Hui more or less similar to that of the Han Chinese around them. The cohesiveness of the Hui people in East China is attributable to factors other than racial and physical similarity. Their religion (Islam, called Hui Chiao or Ch'ing-chen Chiao), language (Chinese, supplemented by Iranian and Arabic elements of a religious nature), and customs which stem from religious practices and observances make them cohesive as an ethnic group in spite of outside cultural forces and the fact that in Shantung the Hui generally do not have large and contiguous communities. Most of the Hui people in Shantung live in Lin-ch'ing, Chi-ning, Chou-ch'eng, P'eng-lai, and cities along the railways.[13]

[771] [162]

The Kuomintang Government seemed to take for granted that the Hui people were sufficiently assimilated into Han Chinese communities and did not merit recognition as a separate ethnic group. In the 1930's the Hui were treated merely as "believers in Islam," and their ethnic difference was minimized. The present Communist government has reversed the Kuomintang

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← There are about 3.5 million Hui people in China. Information on the numerical strength of the Hui people in East China is not yet available.

13. Huang Tse-ts'ang, Shantung, Shanghai, Chung-hua shu-chü, 1935, pp. 99-100.

Annex "A," Subparagraph 1k,
Sociological Background

RELIGION

I. INTRODUCTION

771 Religious organization and activity in China has always been strictly limited by what the state felt to be desirable. Public and private morality were not based on any religion but on a combination of philosophic principles (Confucianism) and secular mores. (On this principle, Confucianism is treated in the chapters on Social Values and Patterns of Living.) Governmental authority judged whether a certain religion was conducive to morality and the welfare of the state and then allowed the religion and its adherents a carefully defined range and sphere of activity. Going beyond that range was regarded as subversive of public welfare and morality, and the religion was curbed or suppressed. As a consequence, China has not had until very recently any "churches," that is, well-organized centrally disciplined organizations of believers capable of decisively influencing public morality or state policy.

With the slow collapse of the traditional order the effectiveness of government control of religion diminished. The Western powers, as they gained more and more rights and concessions from a weakening China, demanded and got "rights" of religious and missionary activity which no strong Chinese government would ever have granted. But the rise of nationalist sentiment brought with it hatred of

• 771 foreigners and of their religions -- hatred that exploded repeatedly in anti-foreign, anti-Christian riots.[1]

Meanwhile another trend was visible. Religious groups and a number of outstanding political leaders began to feel that China could not become a truly modern and western nation unless it was reformed from the moral base upward; religion accounted for the power and success of Western nations. Would not a religion-a religion based on Confucianism, a revitalized Buddhism, or even Christianity -- bring about that basic transformation that China clearly needed?

This view was rejected by two overlapping groups which had decisive power in state and society after 1925. The first were the intellectual leaders, increasingly committed to some form of materialistic philosophy -- a philosophy which held all religion to be parasitic, corrosive and "non-progressive."[2] The second group was the Kuomintang elite, many of whom derived their anti-religious views from the intellectual leadership. For others in the Kuomintang elite the older Confucian view of religions, reinforced by nationalist feeling, reasserted itself; consciously or unconsciously they reverted to the view that no strong self-respecting government should tolerate independent religious bodies that challenged the government's right to control all aspects of public and private life.

1. Tatsuro and Sumiko Yamamoto, "The Anti-Christian Movement in China" Far Eastern Quarterly, Feb. 1953, pp. 133-47.

2. [following page.]

771 Religions in the twentieth century were caught in this crossfire of negative sentiment and attack. To modernize and to become militant was to provoke state suppression, and the effort of religious leaders to stem the rising tide of intellectual materialism failed.[3] In the countryside the old folk religions - varieties of Buddhism and Taoism -- continued to wither away. Christianity made some advances, but it was always tainted by its foreignness, by the fact that its missionaries came with the backing of the Western powers which held China in thrall.

798 Communist policy towards religion is in many ways the culmination of the trends we have described. It reflects the triumph of materialist philosophy and the imposition of materialism as the intellectual orthodoxy. It is highly nationalistic and anti-foreign and thus insists that all organizations of a religious nature cease receiving support from abroad and assert their distinctive Chinese character. It carries forward through the most effective apparatus of control and coercion that China has seen, the confiscation of church property and the secularization of the clergy. The Communist Constitution provides that "Citizens of the People's Republic of China have freedom of religious belief.[4] This means, in practice, that people of various religious persuasions

2. O. Brière, "Les courants philosophiques en Chine depuis 50 ans " Bulletin de l'université de l'Aurore, No. 40, 1947, pp. 561-654.

3. O. Brière op. cit., passim.

4. Article 88 Ch. III.